



**County of Los Angeles
Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Economic Resiliency Task Force
Arts and Culture Sector Recommendation Report**

Summary:

Arts and culture play a critical role in the economic resiliency of Los Angeles County and in the social resiliency of our communities, not just in recovery from the pandemic but in the long term. Supporting this sector's survival will help to preserve our creative economy, the cultural identity and vitality of the region, and the well-being of our residents and communities where they live.

This report from the Arts and Culture Sector Work Group offers five recommendations that will support the reopening of arts and culture venues, stimulate employment, and spur economic growth while supporting the resiliency of the people of Los Angeles County. To address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on different communities and important social and economic issues raised by recent civil unrest, these recommendations center on equity.

The report begins with contextual information about the strength and complexity of our sector and its people. We highlight efforts already underway by arts organizations large and small to support the economy while also meeting the emotional and social needs of residents. We also explain how recommendations relevant to other sectors can support arts and culture. Finally, we forecast outcomes for implementing these recommendations.

Context: Arts and Culture Sector in Los Angeles County:

The arts and culture sector in Los Angeles County is vibrant, diverse, and complex. We are home to 228 museums, 279 art galleries, 580 heritage or historical sites, more than 400 music venues, 330 theaters, plus concert halls, bookstores, art centers, and more.¹ Prior to the pandemic, arts and culture events took place every day in community centers, places of worship, parks, libraries, and even the streets. Our communities are rich with culture bearers who breathe soul and meaning into our daily lives.

People and organizations that make up the infrastructure of arts and culture in LA County are wide-ranging, including artists, arts educators, nonprofit organizations, and small creative businesses. They include world-class performing and visual arts institutions and small and mid-sized organizations. Some have multimillion dollar budgets and large endowments while others are entirely volunteer-run community-based organizations. It includes teaching artists working in all grades in nearly all schools. It includes countless arts and culture collectives and individual artists with a dream and a passion. Los Angeles has been called "America's artist super city," home to more working artists than any other major metropolitan area in the United States.²

¹ World Cities Culture Forum, *Data on over 70 cultural indicators*, <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data>, 2018.

² Ann Markusen, *Los Angeles: America's Artist Super City*, https://www.cciarts.org/Library/docs/LAProject_Report.pdf, 2010.

The arts and culture sector, including the nonprofits and tens of the thousands of people employed in the creative workforce, are part of the LA County creative economy which is a significant driver of our region's economy contributing more than \$200 billion annual output and generating a staggering 1 out of every 5 jobs in the County.³

Each year arts nonprofits in LA County host 13.5 million visits to nearly 200,000 in-person events.⁴ The vast majority of these are grantees of the LA County Department of Arts and Culture, and grantees of other local municipal arts agencies in the region. More than 40,000 people volunteer each year with these organizations. As a result of COVID-19, all those performances, exhibitions, workshops, classes, and fundraisers – and the accompanying employment – stopped in mid-March when the doors closed. Already, nearly a third of our arts nonprofits have laid off or furloughed staff.⁵ More than a third have tapped into their financial reserves. Forty-five percent of them are not confident their organization will survive. We also know that many organizations in the sector – especially those in the performing arts – will be among the last to come back to full operations.

But these closures have had an even greater impact beyond the loss of wages and revenue for artists and organizations. Residents of LA County have lost access to important places and programs where they learn something new, express their culture, explore ideas, gain new skills, find solace, and experience joy. Arts and culture venues are a fundamental part of our social infrastructure, and as such are already playing a critical role in the recovery and long-term resiliency of the region.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis that became an economic crisis and a crisis of social connection. The Department of Public Health under Dr. Barbara Ferrer's leadership has helped us see clearly the racial inequities, showing which communities have been hit hardest by the health crisis. The LA Economic Development Corporation has shown us inequities in terms of which communities have been hit hardest by the economic crisis.

Long-standing inequities in the arts and culture sector led Supervisor Hilda Solis and Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas to author a motion passed in 2015 directing the LA County Arts Commission (now the Department of Arts and Culture) to establish a Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative to come up with recommendations to “enhance the participation and leadership of individuals from underrepresented communities in the arts,” focused on leadership, staffing, programming and audience composition. In 2017, several of those

³ Beacon Economics, *2020 Otis Report on the Creative Economy*, <https://www.otis.edu/creative-economy/2020>, 2020.

⁴ SMU DataArts, *Cultural Data Project*, proprietary data available upon request, <https://www.culturaldata.org/what-we-do/for-researchers-advocates>, 2017.

⁵ Americans for the Arts, *The Economic Impact of Coronavirus on the Arts and Culture Sector*, <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/the-economic-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-arts-and-culture-sector>, data as of June 5, 2020.

recommendations were funded by the Board of Supervisors by unanimous vote and launched by the Department of Arts and Culture.⁶

The arts and culture sector can continue play a critical role as a trusted partner in building our County's economic resiliency as we address the racial and systemic inequities in our social connection crisis that must be resolved to achieve shared prosperity. Prior research has found that while lower-income communities have fewer cultural resources, these resources are more likely to be associated with measurable benefits in other dimensions of wellbeing.⁷ Moreover, cultural engagement is a form of intentional social action that can "develop counter-narratives to structural forces that determine individual and community wellbeing."⁸

Despite the financial challenges they face, our local arts and culture sector is already actively working to support the resilience of LA County and our residents. For example,

- Nearly 80 percent of arts nonprofits report they are delivering artistic content throughout the safer-at-home orders, to help raise community spirit and morale, most of that online.⁹
- Nearly 60 percent of arts nonprofits are communicating with their constituents about the importance of physical distancing, handwashing, and wearing masks.¹⁰
- The City of Los Angeles' Department of Cultural Affairs established a COVID-19 Relief Fund for artists and arts organizations whose scheduled programming was canceled due to the pandemic.
- The Getty Foundation funded a \$10 million LA Arts COVID-19 Relief Fund to support LA-based nonprofit museums and visual arts organizations. These are important starting points for meeting the need. However, these efforts have been limited and mostly segmented by artistic discipline. There has been no major relief or recovery fund for arts nonprofits in LA County of the scale achieved by New York City and other major cities around the world.
- As we move to reopening, organizations with large outdoor venues such as the South Coast Botanic Garden, Huntington Gardens, and Natural History Museum are exploring ways to partner with artists and smaller arts nonprofits to present their work safely outdoors.
- In order to understand the arts and culture needs of LA County residents in terms of both safety and programming, research firms and several organizations including The Music Center, Natural History Museum, and the LA County Department of Arts and Culture will be surveying audience members and participants throughout the summer and fall.

⁶ LA County Arts Commission, *Strengthening Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Arts and Culture Sector for All Los Angeles County Residents*, https://www.lacountyarts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/lacac17_ceiiireport_final.pdf, April 2017.

⁷ Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, *The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The contribution of culture and the arts*, https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=siap_culture_nyc, March 2017.

⁸ Stern and Seifert, op cit.

⁹ Americans for the Arts, op cit.

¹⁰ Americans for the Arts, op cit.

- The LA County Department of Arts and Culture is facilitating virtual meetings that bring together municipal arts agencies across the county, arts service organizations, and philanthropy to explore new ways we can work together and secure resources from a wide variety of sources to provide arts and culture services to the people of LA County.

The impact of COVID-19 on the sector comes on top of existing vulnerabilities and structural inequity. The nonprofit sector is largely undercapitalized. Half of all arts nonprofits in LA County began the pandemic with less than two months of operating cash on hand.¹¹ The recommendations that follow are intended to stimulate employment and strengthen our arts and culture infrastructure. By getting artists and arts organizations back to work, we can continue to support the cultural lives and community resilience of Los Angeles County, and help our residents thrive.

Goals and Recommendations for Recovery:

The recommendations below recognize the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in LA County that has magnified underlying structural and systemic inequities. They are therefore intended to center cultural and racial equity as we seek to address and dismantle historical inequities in services, investments, and opportunities.

They are further built on a few important assumptions:

- Emerging data from audience surveys suggest many people will be unwilling to return to indoor venues – even with strong health and safety protocols in place – until there is a treatment or vaccine for COVID-19.¹² Therefore we assume arts and culture services will need to be available online, outdoors, or in some hybrid setting for the foreseeable future.
- The arts and culture sector, like the Restaurant sector, is made up of a wide range of business models and budget sizes, such that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.
- Some arts organizations own facilities while others are peripatetic and provide their services in many different venues. These two types of organizations will have very different needs.
- The economic recovery will not follow a linear pattern and we may see periodic closures and reopenings in response to changes in infection rates. Moreover, we must think beyond the pandemic and build an economy that is able to recover from future shocks.
- LA County’s Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative (CEII) which was developed through a countywide collaborative consensus-building process provides a relevant framework and set of recommendations to build on as we turn to recovery and resilience of our communities through arts and culture. We encourage the County to establish a timeframe for funding and implementation of all remaining recommendations in this plan.

¹¹ SMU DataArts, op cit.

¹² See for example, Colleen Dilen Schneider, *How COVID-19 & Civil Unrest Are Impacting Intentions to Visit Cultural Entities*, <https://www.colleendilen.com/2020/06/08/how-covid-19-uprising-are-impacting-intentions-to-visit-cultural-entities-data-june-8-2020>, June 8, 2020.

Recommendation 1: Fully fund the Organizational Grants Program and expand the Arts Internship program

Of both immediate importance and long-term benefit, the Organizational Grants Program (OGP) is the primary mechanism through which the Board of Supervisors invests in small and midsize community-based arts nonprofits located throughout LA County. OGP is one of few grant programs that provides general operating support to the field, which translates into job opportunities for arts administrators and artists. Every dollar the County invests in OGP is matched one-for-one from other sources. This program supports hundreds of cultural organizations countywide that reflect the diversity of the county and provide programs and services for our communities.

The Arts Internship program is the County's primary arts and culture workforce development program, putting 203 college and university students to work in 2019 in paid internships with arts nonprofits across the county. The Arts Internship program has expanded its focus to include community college students, thus building a future arts and culture workforce that is racially, economically, and culturally representative of LA County's great diversity. This program opens opportunities to people in communities where a career in the arts may not be considered viable employment.

Recommendation 2: Stimulate employment opportunities and address the social connection crisis through a creative works initiative modeled on the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act¹³ to rebuild our social infrastructure and strengthen the economy

CEII includes two recommendations that are a starting point for bringing arts and culture services to our communities hardest hit by the pandemic: *Neighborhood Bridges* and the *Parks and Libraries Arts Partnership*.¹⁴ These are designed to provide grants and professional development services for arts and culture programs to municipalities and to parks and libraries in areas of LA County with the least arts programming. Through these grants, local artists teaching artists, and arts organizations can be employed to provide culturally relevant arts performances, exhibits, workshops, classes, and activities in their local communities. With guidance from the Department of Public Health and the Department of Mental Health, arts programming can be provided in compliance with Public Health Orders while sharing important messages to support residents in their resilience. Implemented at scale across all of LA County's 106 communities,¹⁵ this can build social connection while putting local artists to work supporting the health and wellbeing of our communities.

These two CEII recommendations can serve as a starting point for a timely and innovative creative works initiative that utilizes both immediate and longer-term investments by the County in our communities. Arts and culture can and should be part of cross-sector neighborhood

¹³ See Linda Frye Burnham and Steven Durland, *Looking for CETA: Tracking the impact of the 1970s federal program that employed artists*, <https://forecastpublicart.org/looking-for-ceta>, Public Art Review #54, Spring/Summer 2016.

¹⁴ LA County Arts Commission, op cit.

¹⁵ Social Science Research Council, *A Portrait of LA County*, <https://measureofamerica.org/los-angeles-county>, 2017.

revitalization projects; repair, construction, and maintenance of physical infrastructure; activating and programming social infrastructure including parks, libraries, and arts and culture venues; educational programs in and out of school; reforming the justice system; cultural preservation projects; and transportation programs like Vision Zero that make our streets safer. When the Department of Public Health or the Office of Immigrant Affairs have messages to communicate to audiences they have historically had trouble reaching, artists can serve as trusted partners and creative communicators. When County departments want to have meaningful engagement with the communities, artists can help break the ice and bridge the gap to ensure community members are heard.

By putting artists to work in this way, the County can stimulate the creative workforce while supporting the missions of many departments and divisions. This creative works initiative would build on the County's leadership role by bringing projects to scale through coordination with the City of LA and other local municipalities, leveraging and incentivizing matching grants, philanthropy, and funds from other federal, state, and local sources.

Recommendation 3: Adopt the Countywide Cultural Policy

The Countywide Cultural Policy, submitted to the Board of Supervisors as a draft on February 28, 2020, provides direction and guidelines for how LA County and its Departments will ensure that every resident of the County has meaningful access to arts and culture. The intent of this policy is to foster an organizational culture that values and celebrates arts, culture, and creativity; strengthens cultural equity and inclusion, and leverages arts and culture in strategies to achieve the highest potential of communities across all aspects of civic life. Adoption of the Countywide Cultural Policy in this moment will help ensure that arts and culture are at the table in County plans related to resilience and recovery, continuing our work as part of the solution.

Recommendation 4: Provide financial support for residents to visit arts and culture venues, participate in arts and culture programs, and access live and online ticketed events

While many arts and culture venues provide free programming and events, many performances, exhibitions, workshops, and other programs are not. Some programs already exist to allow residents to attend for free or very low cost such as the LA County Libraries "Discover and Go" program or the Department of Arts and Culture's partnership with the Department of Public and Social Services to share information on how to access free admission with an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. However, these programs are often unfamiliar to many County residents who could benefit the most. Additionally, arts and cultural programs are not inherently no-cost. As arts and culture venues begin to reopen safely, grants and access initiatives that would allow them to increase free admission to community members – especially those who may not be able to otherwise afford it – would simultaneously provide much-needed revenue to those venues and support the rebuilding of social connections among residents. CEII also includes recommendations related to increasing access to information and cultural events for residents that could be worked toward achieving at scale.

Recommendation 5: Adopt the Public Art in Private Development ordinance to help stimulate the creative sector

Most local jurisdictions with public percent-for-art policies also have private percent-for-art policies. LA County has been on a path to adopt an ordinance to apply a one percent fee for the arts on private development in the County's unincorporated areas. These projects not only bring art to communities but employ artists, designers, fabricators, laborers, and more. The Board of Supervisors could consider limiting developer options to comply with the ordinance to payment of an in-lieu fee for a set period of time to more immediately result in funds that could be utilized for relief and stimulus for the arts sector.

In addition to these five recommendations, we also wish to express our concurrence with policy recommendations to strengthen the resilience of our economy that you may be hearing from other sectors. The benefits of these recommendations cross many sectors, including ours:

- We encourage the County to advocate for the arts and creative industries as one of its policy priorities in Sacramento and Washington, DC. After all, the creative industries generate one in five jobs in the County.¹⁶ The creative workforce can be found in different sectors identified by this task force, including Arts and Culture, Film and Digital Media, Infrastructure, and Small Business. Support for the creative industries – including investment in pathways for youth seeking employment in the creative industries¹⁷ – is also support for each of these critical sectors of our economy.
- The economic crisis brought to light glaring holes in the social safety net for people who work on contract (gig workers). We know that for every one full-time employee employed by an arts nonprofit in LA County, there are nearly four more who are working on contract. This is true for many other sectors of the economy. Efforts to strengthen the safety net must be systemic, for all workers, including arts and culture workers.
- Lack of access to affordable broadband internet has been a significant problem during the pandemic for students trying to learn at home, small businesses trying to serve customers online, and arts nonprofits working to provide performances, classes, and workshops online. The County created an app to help residents find access to free Wi-Fi hotspots. We encourage the County to expand on this and play a more active role in ensuring that all residents have access to affordable broadband internet in their homes, up to and including creation of a municipal broadband system for all.
- We encourage the County to collaborate with the City of Los Angeles and other local municipalities and their arts agencies to ensure artists and nonprofit arts and culture organizations qualify for programs designed for other small businesses, including loans, microloans, payroll protection funding, rent forgiveness, and others that may be made

¹⁶ Beacon Economics, op cit.

¹⁷ LA County Arts Ed Collective and LA County Arts Commission, *Building Creative Career Pathways for Youth: A field scan for LA County*, https://www.lacountyartsedcollective.org/sites/lacaec/files/building_creative_career_pathways_for_youth_web.pdf, April 2019.

available. It is critical that the County ensure access for arts and culture organizations in business and nonprofit recovery and relief efforts and integrate arts and culture organizations and businesses into wider relief efforts funded at all levels.

- To support reopening of arts and culture venues, the County can play a critical role in securing personal protective equipment (PPEs) and cleaning supplies, which are becoming increasingly expensive. The Board of Supervisors is already establishing a grant program to help small businesses with such costs as purchasing PPEs and sanitization materials, but it is not clear whether nonprofits are eligible for these grants.¹⁸ Moreover, as businesses reopen, demand will only rise. The County could function as a central buyer, or could choose to provide incentives to local manufacturers to produce PPEs and cleaning supplies for local use, at a scale large enough to meet rising need. This can also provide needed support for employment in the manufacturing sector.

Forecasted Outcomes for Implementing Recommendations:

1) Timeline

Systems are already in place to kick-start implementation of recommendations 1 and 4 almost immediately, pending available funding, and supports to both immediate needs and the long-term sustainability of the sector. Recommendation 2 can roll out over the medium and long term, pending available funding. Recommendations 3 and 5 can be activated at an upcoming meeting of the Board of Supervisors and can roll out over the medium and long term.

2) Employment

The nonprofit arts and culture sector is not captured well by Bureau of Labor Statistics Labor Market Information, but we have several indicators of its size and scope:

- The City of Los Angeles is home to more than 96,000 artists, making up nearly five percent of the city's workforce¹⁹
- The 2020 Otis Report finds 17,500 people working in the Fine Arts and Performing Arts industry alone,²⁰ one of the fastest growing segments of our creative economy
- IRS records show 3,307 arts, culture, and humanities nonprofits located in the County²¹

Recommendation 1 will employ people most immediately, with OGP grants supporting the hiring or retention of workers, and the Arts Internship program providing college and university students with critical paid internship opportunities that will also advance their longer-term

¹⁸ LA County Board of Supervisors Motion by Supervisors Hilda L. Solis and Janice Hahn, *Development of the Los Angeles County Pandemic-Compliant Businesses and Workers Partnership Program*, <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/146409.pdf>, June 9, 2020.

¹⁹ National Endowment for the Arts, *NEA Tables from the EEO 2006-2010 Data*, <https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/arts-data-profiles/arts-data-profile-1/dp1-nea-tables-eeo-2006-2010-data>, n.d.

²⁰ Beacon Economics, op cit.

²¹ Beacon Economics, op cit.

careers. Recommendations 2 and 5 will roll out over time, employing artists to provide cultural services. Recommendation 4 can help arts and culture venues rehire or avoid layoffs and furloughs of existing staff.

3) Revenue

Recommendations 1, 2 and 5 are designed specifically to stimulate the arts and culture by stimulating employment in the arts and culture sector. Recommendations 1 and 4 can reduce layoffs in arts nonprofits and also provide both employment and early-career professional development to college and university students exploring career opportunities.

Recommendations 2 and 5 will stimulate the hiring of creative sector workers and engagement of arts and culture organizations to create artworks and deliver programs and performances. In addition, recommendation 5 will generate new revenue. Recommendation 3 will provide a framework for all County departments to utilize arts and culture in their own work to address civic issues and community needs.

What cannot be measured in short-term dollars is the value of social connection and support for communities in these difficult times. County investments in all forms of social infrastructure – parks, libraries, community centers, slow streets, and arts and culture venues – will pay off in the long term. Cohesive communities with public facilities that are well maintained, fully staffed, and programmed with activities for all ages are safe and healthy communities. We know from prior research here in LA County that visible investments in communities can build trust in government,²² so that when the next shock arrives, people know where to look for reliable information to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

What also cannot be measured is the value of the County's government role in utilizing public funding to support a culture that actively embraces equity, inclusion, and the creative expression and engagement of our Black community and all of our historically marginalized communities, particularly at this time when the unfortunate events of our past and present mean we feel the need to say that Black Lives Matter. It is a vital aspect of our collective healing, truth-telling, and part of shifting greater public investment to our communities in positive ways.

The County has already shown great leadership in the arts demonstrated by its creation of the Department of Arts and Culture which can be instrumental in this work. The arts and culture sector can and will continue to find creative and innovative ways serve our communities and support them in our resilience. We are only limited by our resources.

²² Susannah Laramée Kidd, *Arts as Infrastructure: An evaluation of civic art and public engagement in four communities in South Los Angeles County*, https://www.lacountyarts.org/sites/default/files/lacac_artinfrasturcture_report_2018_-_web_1.pdf, May 2018.